WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

GEORGE TAYLOR RYGH

LIBRARY OF PRINCETON
MAY 28 1930
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

BT 215 .R9 1930
Rygh, George Taylor, 1860-
1942.
What think ye of Christ?

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

LIBRARY OF PRINCETON
MAY 28 1930
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

Whose Son Is He?

Matthew 22:42

by

GEORGE TAYLOR RYGH

AUGSBURG PUBLISHING HOUSE
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

Copyrighted 1930
by the Augsburg Publishing House

First Edition
February 1930

Manufactured in the
United States of America

DEDICATED

To

W. H. G.

PREFACE

The immediate incentive to the writing of this book was a volume of the same title by F. Bettex. The question constituting the title haunted my mind for years. I have always felt that the answer to that question involved my weal or woe for time and eternity. The greatest and most momentous question that can be put to anybody is not: How can you get possession of this world's goods? How can you become famous? How can you attain to high station in the world of men? But rather, What do you think of Christ? What is He to you? For if you answer that question correctly and from profound conviction, you will also understand how God Almighty may dwell in a human heart as in His own peculiar temple.

After all, the Christian faith is not primarily the intellectual assent to a set of doctrines culled from the Bible; rather it is a living, conscious and definite trust in the Person of the redeeming Christ. The content of faith is Christ. The Person of Christ is the central luminary around which the entire system of truth revolves.

I am glad to acknowledge my indebtedness to Dr. Bettex not only for the general arrangement of the subject-matter, but also for much of the inspiration which has enabled me to carry out the idea. If the book shall succeed in strengthening the wavering faith of some follower of the Lord Jesus, or remove the shadow of doubt from the mind of some honest seeker after the truth, I shall be more than repaid.

—G. T. R.

CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I.	The Mystery of Godliness	1
II.	The Anointed of God	8
III.	The Mediator Between God and Man	14
IV.	The Atoning Sacrifice	18
V.	The Humiliated Messenger	24
VI.	The God-Man	29
VII.	The Suffering Savior	38
VIII.	He Died for Us	43
IX.	The Merciful Savior	46
X.	Jesus, the Word of God to Mankind	55
XI.	Parables and Miracles	62
XII.	The Delectable Mountains	69
XIII.	With Christ in Paradise	74

"What Think Ye of Christ?"

I

THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS

AFTER all, is not this the most important question in life? It concerns a man's relation to his Creator; it concerns the salvation of a man's soul, the preservation of his individual personality, if you will. Man is endowed by the Creator with a strong sense of self-preservation. He seeks to save his life for the world that now is and for that which is to come. He shrinks from the idea of annihilation. The man who denies the continuance of personality after death will find nothing to interest him in these pages. As ordinary human beings, however, we realize the fundamental truth in the well-known lines:

> *"'Tis not the whole of life to live;*
> *Nor all of death to die."*
>
> —MONTGOMERY.

There is something more than mere physical existence; there is something more than mere physical death. All pagan peoples have recognized the existence of the soul and the permanence of personality. "In the light of anthropological research," writes Professor Shailer Matthews, "it may safely be said, that the belief in some sort of *post mortem* existence is universal." In fact, it is an essential element in every philosophical view of the world. In some civilizations the departed spirit is supposed to remain in the vicinity of the body, or even in the grave with the body. Thus, in a vague manner, there is a feeling that the spirit is to be reunited with the body in another existence. The Christian doctrine of immortality rests firmly upon the revelation of God in the Scriptures, and although natural science is limited to that

which can be understood on the basis of natural phenomena, it by no means denies the immortality of the soul nor yet the resurrection of the body. On the contrary, science readily admits the possibility and even the probability of both.

In this connection it is interesting to note the demarkation given to science by Professor Henry Fairfield Osborn, president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, in reply to a lecture delivered by Dr. Harry E. Barnes of Smith College. Dr. Barnes' talk was on the subject, "Science Versus Religion as a Guide to Life," and was made before the joint session of the Association, recently held in the city of New York. In his paper Dr. Barnes suggested a revision of the concept of God as held by Christians the world over. Said Dr. Osborn in a statement given to the press after the meeting:

"This is a scientific meeting and science has to do with what can be understood by weighing, measuring and analysis of the universe, and it covers the whole realm of what can be estimated and understood. It stops there.

"Dr. Barnes took an unwarranted step in introducing a metaphysical, philosophical and religious subject. It was an unwarranted intrusion. He took advantage of this great platform of the American Association for the Advancement of Science to give expression to his own opinion on a subject that was totally unrelated to the subjects discussed here."

"Without expressing my personal view, as to whether he was right or wrong, I desire to say that he was entirely wrong in taking this occasion to put out these views and in giving the impression that his private opinion came with more or less force because it came from this association."

It would obviate a great deal of misunderstanding if all scientists would heed the warning of this great scientist and confine themselves strictly to the phenomena of nature, instead of speaking and writing *ex cathedra* on subjects with which they are no more conversant than is

the unscientific man. Too often they undertake to exploit personal opinions on theology and revelation on the basis of the prestige which they enjoy as scientists. Dr. Osborn, whom all the world respects as a scientist, gives scientists of every description the timely admonition not to intrude in the domain of religion and the supernatural, for which they possess neither the faculty nor the equipment to do efficient research work.

There have been great questions pressing for answer in all stages of the world's history; our age is no exception to the rule. Some of these questions seem to be perennial and incapable of being answered correctly and finally, as for instance, the question of government. Others, again, have been answered adequately, as for instance, the question of slavery. In our own day, there are the great questions connected with international peace, the rights of minorities, of small and weak nations, of the abolition of poverty and disease, of economic systems, of the more equable distribution of wealth, and so on endlessly. But, after all, these questions, however burning they may be for the time being, are but transitory, and affect our material life chiefly. Other questions will press forward and relegate them to the background. A person may be concerned about them or he may ignore them, as he pleases; one may still live and carry on.

One question, however, remains to be answered by every one who hears it, "What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He?" Manifestly He who put the question wanted the answer which was given by Simon Peter: "We believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 7:69); or simply, as given by the disciples under other conditions, "Of a truth, Thou art the Son of God" (Matt. 14:33); or, as Jesus Himself answered the momentous question, "I am the Son of God" (Matt. 27: 43). He was crucified for saying that He was the Son of God, the Messiah promised by the Old Testament prophets, whose name was to be called "Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Is. 9:6). He was scourged,

crowned with thorns and nailed to the cross because He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58). As a rule, Jesus speaks of Himself as the Son of Man, the Son of David, or with some such human designation, but again and unequivocally as the Son of God, even as the Jews understood His words and for which they condemned Him to crucifixion, the penalty for gross blasphemy.

The answer which the Christian Church of all ages has given to the question, "What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He?" is that of the Apostle Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." He is, then, the Son of David, but at the same time the eternal Son of God. He has a Divine nature as well as a human nature. He is God united with the human race in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, the God-Man, or, as He is also called, the Second Adam, comprising in Himself humanity as an entity. *But,* and this is the heart of the answer, "In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9). God and humanity are united in Jesus Christ. There can be no question as to what the Bible teaches in regard to the Divine human personality of Christ and His mission in coming to the world. Nor can there be any question as to the answer which Jesus expects to the question, "What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He?"

The question, then, is not as to who or what the Christ was to be according to the Sacred Scriptures; that is clear from scores of prophecies and descriptions of Him. Anyone who recognizes the Bible as the inspired Word of God has no doubt as to the character and personality of the Christ. He who does not so regard the Scriptures will create for himself a Christ who is not the Christ of the Bible, or he will dispense with any Christ whatever. That is for the individual to settle for himself. But for us who find no way of salvation by work-righteousness, no cleansing from the inner pollution of sin by our own scouring; no rescue of personality by our unaided efforts; no satisfaction in man-made

theories as to the right way back to God, there is intellectual and spiritual rest in the words of Christ: "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me." There is peace and the end of our searching in the unconditional acceptance of the pronouncement of the apostle Peter: "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12); and he refers to the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

Is then the historical Jesus of Nazareth the Christ foretold in the Old Testament? Is Jesus the Christ of God? That is the question which Christ puts to all men, also to each one of us individually. And upon our answer to that question depends our eternal destiny. For this reason it is the most crucial question in our individual lives.

What think you of Christ? Do you believe that in Jesus of Nazareth dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily? Do you believe that the historical Jesus of Nazareth was and is the incarnation of God Almighty? For, according to the Scriptures, He is now incarnate also in glory, as we shall be incarnate in heaven. Do you believe that God incarnated Himself in the son of Mary as the Second Adam, the whole human race in His one personality?

"Incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary," reads the Nicaean Creed. But, you say, the idea of the incarnation of deities was common in ancient religions. The idea flourished among the ancient Greeks and Romans. "Temporary assumption of human form on the part of different deities was common, and in later times incarnations of a more enduring character were seen in the persons of distinguished individuals such as Alexander the Great, Demetrius, Augustus, and many others who were believed to have rendered unique service to mankind" (S. J. Case, under "Incarnations," in *A Dictionary of Religion and Ethics*). The so-called Modernists assert that the unique incarnation of Jesus was but the evolutionary result of the incarnation theories of the gentile

world, translated into Christianity for the purpose of "impressing the gentiles with the superior significance of Jesus." The dilemma of rationally explaining the union of the Godhead with humanity was obviated by laying hold of both horns of the dilemma, and confessing in the creed put forth by the Council of Chalcedon (451) that in Christ there are two natures in one person. No explanation as to how the two natures are united was given, say the Modernists.

The last statement is absolutely correct—no rational explanation can be given of the Divine-human personality of Jesus. It is and will always remain a mystery. "Without controversy," writes St. Paul, "great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (I Tim. 3:16). May not the incarnations of the gentiles have been but adumbrations of the great revelation of God in Christ Jesus, the pathetic gropings of the seeking mind after the love of God? Who knows? The heathen were vividly conscious of sin and guilt; is it strange that they should seek the favor of the gods by incarnating them in certain good and powerful human beings? Is it strange that they should try to come close to their gods through the mediation of priests and prophets? Not at all. There is a far better and more rational explanation of the gentile notion of incarnation than that given by evolutionists in their attempt to vindicate their peculiar theory. The idea of the incarnation of God in man is elemental in human nature, and as innate as is the consciousness of sin and guilt.

Of course the incarnation is a mystery; so is the resurrection of the body; so is the promised restoration of all things to their original perfection. But so also is the grass that grows; so is the food you eat and in a few hours is transformed into flesh and bone, thought, will, emotion and sense; so is life itself a mystery, and so are all the conditions of life and death. As a matter of fact, we live and move in a world of mysteries. If we did not

accept mysteries, we should soon pass out of existence. The rational mind does not balk at mysteries.

But what think you of Christ? Whose son is He? What think you of Jesus of Nazareth? He said of Himself, "I and My Father are one" (John 10:30). He said, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John 1:18). He said, "The Father that sent Me beareth witness of Me" (John 8:18). He declared, "I am in the Father, and the Father in Me" (John 14:11). And so on endlessly. Jesus identifies Himself with God. He is God, the mighty Creator of all things. He is man, a child wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. And yet, in the history of nineteen centuries, whose name is like to the name of Jesus? Where is Demetrius, Augustus, Domitian, and the whole line of pretended incarnations? If mentioned at all, they are remembered as heroic copies of frail humanity. They are at best nullities, of no account, nothing more than dead names. But Jesus of Nazareth! His name shines as the sun over all the earth. His beneficent power dispels the darkness of sin and ignorance and fear, and fills millions of human lives with peace and gladness, because His name brings the love of God to men and reunites them with their Creator. Men may argue about His deity, they may scoff at His lowly birth, they may ridicule His followers as deluded ignoramuses, and yet, friend, what would you? Is not the influence of Jesus down through the centuries evidence enough to convince you that God was in Christ Jesus, reconciling the world to Himself? His power of salvation is manifest to all the world. He meets the deepest longings of the human heart as no human philosophy can meet them. The soul is content to know Him.

II

THE ANOINTED OF GOD

WE all know the general outlines of the life of Jesus. No man on earth, I suppose, has had more biographies than has the Prophet of Nazareth. Yet, so far as we know, He left nothing written by His own hand. He is a tremendously interesting character, a figure which forms to the civilized world the center of history. The natal days of other great men are commemorated, some of them even nationally. But no event is so universally celebrated as is that of the birth of Christ. With the setting of the sun, Christmas Eve is a sacred memorial all around the globe, and Christmas Day a festival of joy and good-will the world over.

The story is simple and well authenticated. The Gospels tell it fully and completely, each evangelist in his own way, as he knew it and was familiar with it. For they had walked with Him, and talked with Him, and had been with Him as well in familiar converse as when He was addressing great multitudes. They had seen His wonderful works, and their narratives thrill with the conviction of onlookers and observers. We all, as it were, intuitively distinguish between the narrative of one who has been present at the episode he describes and that of one to whom the story has been told. There is the thrill of reality in the story of the one, which is missing in that of the second-hand narrator.

Some nineteen hundred years ago, there was born in Bethlehem, Judea, a child whose reputed father was one Joseph, of Nazareth, and whose mother was a virgin, named Mary. For the people in Galilee, being astonished at His marvelous teachings in their synagogue, said: "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? and His brethren, James, and Joseph, and Simon, and Judas?" (Matt. 13:55). He had grown to man-

hood among them, had worked at His foster-father's trade, and spent the first thirty years of His life at Nazareth. After the visit to the Temple in Jerusalem with His parents, we hear nothing more of Joseph; Mary was alone with her children. Then, at the age of thirty years, Jesus went forth to preach the Kingdom of God, to perform miracles and to be crucified under Pontius Pilate, rising from the grave on the third day after His death, revealing Himself in a glorified body to His disciples, and finally disappearing from their view in a cloud from the Mount of Olives. Such, at least, is a sketchy outline of the life of Jesus. But that simple sketch comprehends the greatest facts of all history.

It is easy enough to sing the sentimental ditty beginning:

> *"I think when I read that sweet story of old,*
> *When Jesus was here among men,"*

and to assert that if I had lived then, I would have believed Him to be the Son of God and would have followed Him through thick and thin as His faithful disciple. It is easy enough to say: "If I had lived at the time of Jesus, and heard His wonderful words and seen His beneficent miracles, I should have believed in Him and never joined in the horrible cry, 'Crucify Him! Crucify Him!'" But all such asseverations cost nothing; they are goods on the bargain counter of emotionalism. It costs more than a breath or two to believe that the persecuted, discredited and crucified Jesus from the peasant country of Galilee was the incarnation of Almighty God Himself. Very likely the prophecy would be fulfilled in our case as it was in the case of Jesus' own nation, which says: "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him" (Isaiah 53:2).

During the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when all the world trembled under the tramp of the Roman legions, and victory perched as an eagle upon their banners, a young man, a carpenter by trade (Mark 6:3), and said

to be from Nazareth, where His brothers and sisters were well known (Matt. 13:55,56), began to attract public notice by His preaching of the Kingdom of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand: Repent ye, and believe the Gospel" (Mark 1:15). Walking by the sea of Galilee, He saw some fishermen casting their net into the sea, and invited them to come and follow Him, promising to make them fishers of men. They obeyed the summons and others did the same. A small group of disciples was thus created. On the Sabbath He taught in the Capernaum synagogue and greatly astonished the people by claiming that the prophecies of the Sacred Volume concerning the Messiah were being fulfilled in Himself. Thus He claimed to be the Anointed of God, the Redeemer of the world, the Son of God. No wonder the people were astonished; no wonder His claims made a profound impression.

He sought no authorization from the High Priest for permission to expound the Word of God, nor did He seek approval of the scribes and elders, who had the custody of doctrine and precept (Matt. 21:23-27). He not only ignored them but warned the people against them and their practices. Neither did He mix in party politics. His people groaned under the Roman yoke, but their civil and political liberation did not seem to worry Him. He taught the fundamental principles of justice in private and public life as based upon the fear of God. He inculcated the duty of rendering to Caesar that which is owing to Caesar and to God that which is owing to God. When the people in their enthusiasm for Him desired to make Him king, He fled into the desert. There was nothing extraordinary about His person and manner of life, except perhaps that He seemed to associate chiefly with the common people, laborers, even with sinners and outcasts, much to the offense of the self-righteous and proud Pharisees. The man in the street, the man at the plow, the woman at her well, the tax-collector at his till,—these and the likes of them, drew His particular at-

tention and seemed most ready to listen to His words. He taught something above and beyond the trivial prescriptions of traditional religion, and spake as one having authority.

Most people said that He was a good man (Matt. 7:12), who went about comforting sinners, healing the sick, bringing hope to the hopeless, and even performing miracles upon the blind, the deaf and those possessed of evil spirits. But there were also traducers, who said that He was a glutton, a wine-bibber, and associate of bad people. Furthermore they said that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem in Judea, according to the Prophet Micah, and this man came from Nazareth in Galilee. Who ever heard of anything good coming out of Nazareth? Then, too, as regards the miracles He was said to perform, it was plain that "He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of devils casteth out devils" (Mark 3:22). At the raising of the daughter of Jairus from the dead, had He not Himself said: "The maid is not dead, but sleepeth" (Matt. 9:24)? Of course in their malice they neglected to add that the people "laughed Him to scorn" because He asserted that the dead maiden was not really dead but only sleeping. They all knew she was dead. So far as the story about the raising of Lazarus from the dead, four days in the grave, was concerned, everybody knew that He was an intimate friend of the family, and that He made His home there when in that vicinity. It was clear as day that between them they had framed up the sensational story of the resurrection of Lazarus. As for Jesus walking on the sea, what disinterested parties were there to bear witness to the actuality of the miracle? There were a few superstitious and excitable individuals who imagined all sorts of things in the dimness of the night, and could not see that their master was simply walking along the shore of the lake. Then again, He was reputed to have fed five thousand men, besides women and children in the wilderness, famishing for hunger, with two loaves of barley bread and a few small fishes, simply by lifting up His hands in prayer to God. Who knows

how many of His deluded followers carried in their sleeves and pockets food enough to feed not only themselves but the entire crowd? That miracle, too, was a palpable fraud.

As for the claim of Jesus, veiled in more or less obscure language, to the effect that He was sent of God, yea, even was God Himself, as attested also by the liar prophet John, whom King Herod had caused to be beheaded, if Jesus was endowed with the power of God why had He not lifted a finger to save this good friend from the execution of the brutal decree of the king? (Matt. 21:25). Why had He taken ship and hid Himself in the desert, to be shortly followed by His cowardly disciples? (Matt. 14:13). And when the priests and scribes had demanded of Him a sign from heaven to validate His claims, how had He answered them? "Why doth this generation seek after a sign? Verily I say unto you, there shall no sign be given unto this generation" (Mark 8:12). The Pharisees and Sadducees, also requiring a sign, were given this answer: "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas" (Matt. 16:4). Thereupon He left them, and departed. In general, the chief priests and Pharisees had come to this conclusion: "Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on Him? But this people who knoweth not the Law are cursed" (John 7:47-49). Why, not even His own brothers believed in Him (John 7:5). His own brothers, who had lived with Him in the parental home, who had eaten at the same table with Him for years, who had worked side by side with Him, could see nothing particularly Divine in Him, and could not comprehend why He should pretend to be the Messiah, the Son of God. They were chagrined to know that He exposed Himself and His family to ridicule. There was not much in this peripathetic preacher and His faithful little group of disciples to convince a materialistic world of His Deity and His coming in the flesh in fulfillment of prophecy.

Are we sure that we would have believed in Him? Would we have stood out against the authorities, the scribes and Pharisees, the learned and the leaders, and confessed our faith in the prophet of a despised Nazareth as the Son of God, the Savior of the world? I am not at all certain that we should have so accepted Jesus. Would we have left all things and followed Him? Would we have endured ostracism from our own family and the contempt of our friends, the loss of goods and reputation, of membership in the synagogue and in the nation, rather than deny our faith in Jesus as God Incarnate, come to suffer and die for the sin of the world? Then indeed you would be entitled to share in the promise which Jesus gave the disciples who had remained faithful: "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me; that ye may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:28-30). If we are not ready to confess such faith and renunciation, we had better bow in humility and say: No, I would not have believed in Jesus as my Savior, nor would I have joined His nondescript company of sinners and outcasts. I rather think that I would have joined in the clamor for His crucifixion. Probably I would have seen no form, comeliness, nor beauty in Him.

Rather let us thank God that we live in an age when it is far easier to believe in Christ since we have nineteen centuries of history to strengthen our faith in His deity and unique personality. If Jesus called upon men in His day to believe in Him for His very works' sake, much more should we be convinced of the truth of His claims by the works which He has wrought in millions of lives and in many nations through all these centuries of Christian history. But intellectual conviction is not all there is to a living, saving faith.

III

THE MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND MAN

WHAT think you of Christ? Whose Son is He? At the least you probably agree with the noted Jewish scholar, Dr. Joseph Klausner, who ends his famous book, *Jesus of Nazareth*, with the statement: "In His ethical code there is a sublimity, distinctiveness, and originality in form unparalleled in any other Hebrew ethical code; neither is there any parallel to the remarkable art of His parables. The shrewdness and sharpness of His proverbs and His forceful epigrams serve, in an exceptional degree, to make ethical ideas a popular possession. If ever the day should come and this ethical code be stripped of its wrappings of miracles and mysticism, the Book of the Ethics of Jesus will be one of the choicest treasures of the literature of Israel for all time." In other words, Jesus is, for the Jewish people a great ethical teacher. Removing the miracles and the mysticism attached to His teachings, Jesus is to the Jews the greatest of ethical teachers.

Well, that is something by way of an answer to the great question, "What think ye of Christ?" For a Jew, it is saying quite a good deal. To a believer in the deity of Jesus, the answer is unsatisfactory. For it is placing Jesus in the same category as other great teachers, such as Socrates, Seneca, Buddha, Moses, Augustine, Luther, and John Calvin. If that is all the answer we can give to the paramount question, Jesus will be of very little help to us. When I come to shuffle off this mortal coil, am I to pray to Socrates, to Zoroaster, or to Luther? Can they deliver me from my sin and guilt? Can they go with me through the valley of the shadow of death? But that is the crucial question. How about the sins of my life? How are they to be blotted out? How is my

soul to be cleansed of the contamination of sin? In the face of death and judgment, euphemisms do not go. Dubbing real sin as psycho-neurosis, or explaining it away as the unavoidable expression of psychic evolution, gives me no assurance of forgiveness and peace with God. But forgiveness of sin is the nerve-centre of religion. And religion is not ethics or morals. Ethics grows out of religion, as the tree grows out of the root. There can be no ethics without religion, for ethics always acknowledges a Supreme Being to whom men are accountable. This recognition is the basis of all religion. The need of salvation from sin and its just and equable punishment is the very core and kernel of religion. My own character, however fine and praise-worthy in the eyes of the world, still leaves me a sinner before God.

The recognition of individual and communal guilt is common among all nations. Hence men have at all times sought the forgiveness of sin and the remission of guilt by sacrifices to their gods. The ancient Egyptians had this consciousness of sin and guilt, as testified by the beautiful epitaph: "O my heart, which I have inherited from my mother, and which I had in my earthly life, do not rise up to testify against me! Do not accuse me before God!" And the penitent found comfort in the death liturgy of the priest, through whom God thus spake: "I am Atoum (the Unapproachable), who has created heaven and has made all creatures. I was yesterday, and know the morrow. I am the Law of Law. I forgive sins. I wash away pollutions."

The Aztecs of ancient Mexico, as also the Hindus of India, believed their sins forgiven when the priest, having climbed to the top dais of the temple, there held aloft the bleeding heart of a human sacrifice. What a symbolism! No more precious sacrifice can be given to God than the heart which trembles in the consciousness of sin and transgression. The ancient Greeks, Romans and Teutons sought forgiveness of sin from their deities. "The practice of human sacrifices has been found among practically every race that has advanced beyond the stage

of savagery," says an authority on the subject. "Sacrifice in varying forms was fundamental in all primitive religions," says J. M. Powis Smith in *A Dictionary of Religion and Ethics,* p. 394, "and has been prominent in more advanced religions, such as those of the Babylonians, Assyrians, and Egyptians, the Zoroastrianism of Persia, the systems of Greeks and Romans, the Islam of Mohammedans, the Taoism and Buddhism of China, the Shintoism of Japan, the Brahmanism of India, the Monotheism of the Hebrews, and even in Christianity, in some of its phases. The kinds of offerings, the materials used, and the sacrificial seasons everywhere have much in common." The sacrificial nature of the death of Christ in atonement for the sins of mankind has been almost universally accepted by Christians. The assurance of forgiveness and the favor of God rests upon the atoning sacrifice of Christ.

After all, no one can forgive sins but God, against whom every sin is committed. Before I have sinned against my fellowman, I have sinned against God and violated His commandments. Therefore He alone can remit my sins and blot out my iniquities. Since no man can make amends for my wrong-doing, God Himself must provide the necessary sacrifice. The Creator must save His creature from the death-penalty of sin, for no man can save another. When a strong angel proclaimed with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" the answer was, "And no man in heaven, nor in the earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon." And John wept much, because no man was able to break the seals of the book. But what happened? "And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof" (Rev. 5:1-5). The Book of God's Remembrance, containing the sins of every human being, sealed irrevocably against the power of men or angels to open it, was opened by the Son of God, who broke the seals not only of His

own grave but of the spiritual grave of repentant mankind.

In holy awe and ecstasy John, the disciple, writes: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . All things were made by Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made . . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:13-14). Centuries before the death of Jesus on the cross, Isaiah the prophet, illumined by the Holy Ghost, wrote of the Messiah: "Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows . . . He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed" (Is. 53:4,5). Likewise the great apostle bears testimony: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them" (II Cor. 5:19). Hence there is forgiveness for sin through the mediation of God Himself. What religion teaches anything even remotely approaching this doctrine of the atonement for sin made by God Himself? The Creator sacrifices Himself for His lost and erring creature. We should be willing to place our salvation in the hands of so loving a God.

IV

THE ATONING SACRIFICE

WHAT think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He? We can readily sympathize with the doubter, who, like the disciple Thomas, must be presented with scientific evidence of the reality of Jesus as the Son of God. We can understand his intellectual attitude. We can even understand the unbeliever, who shakes his head in dissent from the claim of Jesus as the incarnation of God Himself and the Savior of the world. But one has less sympathy with the denier of revelation, nor do we understand his way of thinking. For the materialist who believes nothing beyond that which can be demonstrated by test-tubes and microscopes is utterly lacking in that intellectuality of which he makes boast. No wonder King David bluntly said, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Ps. 14:1). Because we can not demonstrate a thing with our natural senses, we would certainly be foolish to deny the reality of the thing itself. The great forces of nature are unseen forces, and yet they are tremendously real. Such material things as air, electricity, ether, and the like are real, substantial things, and to deny their character would simply expose one's imbecility.

John D. Rockefeller, Jr., in an address at the dedication of the beautiful chapel of the University of Chicago, said some rational things, among them the following: "In applying the test of what is truth in religion, one should be prepared to accept as evidence what one would accept as proof of truth in the physical world. There are truths in the realm of mathematics, for example, that can be demonstrated beyond the peradventure of doubt. The same is the case in the realm of chemistry. Again, in the physical world there are things the reality of which can be established by sight, or touch, or sound, or smell, such as a sunset, a tree, the song of a bird, the fragrance

of a flower. At the same time, no less well-established a fact in the physical world is the existence of wireless waves. Surely no one who has talked over the radio-telephone from New York to London doubts their reality, and yet they have never been seen or touched. It is obvious, then, that there are truths in the physical world commonly accepted as such the existence of which cannot be directly established by the senses but only by observing the phenomena that result from their existence and action. Why, then, would we be less willing to accept similar evidence of the existence of truth in the spiritual world? Who, for example, has seen a mother's love with the eye or felt it with the hand or heard its heart-beat with the ear? And yet, is there any one here who can by cunning argument or power of logic be made to doubt the reality of his mother's love? Again, who can prove by the methods of the laboratory the existence of beauty, of goodness, of heroism, of self-sacrifice? In spite of that fact, is their existence any less real than the material of which this chapel is built or the people who built it?"

Since the unseen forces of nature must be admitted as realities solely on the basis of their results, why should not the reality of the spiritual forces be recognized on the basis of their results in the lives of men? Why should not the reality of God in contact with the spirit of man be recognized as a fact amply demonstrated? Why should not the spirit of Satan in contact with the spirit of man be acknowledged by its evil effects? Looking, then, merely at results, who will deny the reality of the revelation of the Eternal Spirit as the God of love and mercy through the medium of a human being, like us in all things except in sin? Who will deny that the historical Jesus of Nazareth is the Logos, the revelation of the Spirit of God to the spirit of man? If God is almighty, holy and righteous altogether, how otherwise could God possibly prove His desire to save mankind from sin and the righteous wages of sin than by uniting Himself with mankind and thus Himself, the Creator, saving His own creation? By sending the Angel Gabriel or a band of

Cherubim and Seraphim to bear the sin of the world and die the death entailed by the sins of every mortal man? But we remember that the angels are creatures of God even as we are. They are therefore not capable of atoning for the iniquities of a wicked world. By writing in letters of fire across the heavens that He wills not the death of any sinner but rather that he may return to God and live? But that proclamation would not satisfy our conscience in the matter of our transgression of the holy Law of God. Deep down in the soul we know that not all the virtues of angels, nor all the sorrows of men, can by any means atone for the smallest sin committed by any human being. "Thou must save, and Thou alone," is a refrain that runs through the universal heart of mankind. The wages of sin must be paid, or there is no God.

God has constructed the world on the basis of righteousness. Justice is a fundamental principle that meets us on every hand in our daily lives. Knowledge is based on experience, and we know by experience that two and two make four. We know by equally valid and reliable experience that every sin carries within itself the seed of its own penalty. We need no Scripture passages to teach us that essential principle of even-handed justice. By an eternal law sin and guilt are concomitant. No man can avoid it, no Congress can amend it or rescind it. The Law of Retribution is the moral foundation of the universe. He who leaps into the fire will be burned; he who throws himself from a precipice will be killed; he who sinks in the ocean will drown; he who sows tares will reap tares. Every sin in thought, word and deed bears within itself the principle of death, and not only physical death but the death of the soul. We may blink the fact, we may deny it, we may extenuate the wrong-doing, but no sophistry, no euphemism can alter the Law that the soul that sinneth, it shall die. Not because God, the Righteous Judge, is hard-hearted and inexorable in His demands for justice; not that God gloats over the infliction of punishment upon sinners, but because the sinner arouses the wrath of God in his own soul, which is in its origin a

part of God Himself; he separates himself from God, draws away from God, segregates himself. By separating itself from God, who is the Source of Life, the soul sinks into the sorrows of death. The fact is, that sin is moral self-destruction.

The government of the world and of all creation, for that matter, rests upon the principle of justice. Nature all about us, conscience within us, and the clear revelation of God in His Word, teach and enforce this truth. There is a moral government of the world, as men agree. Nor does it seem rational to blame God for one's sins on the ground of being created with a sinful nature, as does Robert Burns:

> *"Thou knowest that Thou formedst me*
> *With passions wild and strong,*
> *And listening to their witching voice*
> *Has often led me wrong."*

Adam laid the blame upon God for his sin; but God did not accept his excuse. God held Adam accountable for the sin he had committed. Every man sins by his own free will, and is therefore responsible to God.

Man was not originally created with a sinful nature. "God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Gen. 1:31), man included. Sin is therefore an alien element in the soul of man, an incongruous element, like grit in the mechanism of a watch. "Sin entered into the world by one man," says the Apostle, "and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12). That is the sordid story, however it is interpreted. And salvation is the restoration of that which sin has destroyed. To blame God for the sin and wretchedness in the world is irrational; for without a free will and choice between good and evil, man would be under constraint and no more than a stock or a stone.

God, on the other hand, who is the Source and Author of all beings, knows no change: He is ever the same just, holy and righteous God. He is "the Father of

lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17). If He were otherwise, we could not worship Him as God. The human soul thirsts after righteousness, and realizes the unchangeableness of justice, which demands reward for the good and punishment for the evil. If that were not so, the pillars of the moral world would crumble and collapse. There would be no God, no justice, no moral order in the universe.

Sorrow for sin is not enough. Contrition is not enough. Justice demands the equivalent in punishment for the sin committed. The scales of sin and suffering must balance. Else there is no justice. Sin must be atoned. What of the contrite criminal who would come to court and say: "Your Honor: 'It is true that I murdered a man last year, but since that time I have not killed anybody, and do not purpose to murder anyone in the future. For these reasons I demand my liberty and forgiveness for the murder I committed a year ago.'" Justice requires that the guilt be atoned. "Without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. 9:22). Not all the tears of a lifetime can blot out the stain of sin in a man's soul. Justice, complete and adequate justice, is a fundamental principle of the universe, indelibly graven in the human conscience. And since every transgression of the Law of God remains on the head of the sinner until adequately atoned, it follows that the wrath of God abides forever upon the transgressor. He has cut himself off from God and plunged headlong into the abyss of estrangement from God.

It is true that God forgave the sins of His repentant people in the old Covenant, but he reads his Old Testament indifferently who does not realize that the mercy of God thus extended was based upon the promises of God from the first sin committed regarding the atoning sacrifice of the Messiah to come. The sacrifices under various forms invariably typified the Sacrifice to be made once and for all by the Son of Man on the cross of Calvary. In Him the Second Adam, who bare the sin of the world in His sacred body on the accursed tree, both God

and humanity were united. As the death of Christ is the atonement for our sins; as it will be for all mankind; so it was by retroaction for the sins of those who lived in ages long past. "Forasmuch as ye know," writes the apostle, "that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot; who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" (I Peter 1:18-20). Guilt and forgiveness are compressed in the great proclamation of John the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

V

THE HUMILIATED MESSENGER

WHY was Christ born in poverty? Why in such humble circumstances? He was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger, the evangelist tells us. There was no room for Joseph and Mary in the inn. The weary mother must content herself with a pallet in a room that served to shelter the kine. All through the earthly life of Jesus runs the pathetic note of poverty and humiliation. He says Himself: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head" (Matt. 8:20). In His youth at Nazareth He earned His daily bread in the sweat of His brow. During the years of His public ministry He was frugally served by His faithful disciples, one of whom carried the scanty purse. Why all this hardship and deprivation from the cradle to the cross? Would it not be easier to believe on Him as the mighty God incarnate if He had been born in a palace and reared as a prince amid wealth and magnificence, subserviently attended by courtiers and flattering aristocrats? Why did He not come as a royal personage, or better still, as the ruler of the great Roman world-power? To many minds that would seem to have been far more reasonable. As a Roman emperor His influence would have been immeasurable. He could have promulgated laws and created institutions of far-reaching betterment among all classes of society. He could have suppressed evil and advanced every good cause with the sheer power of His Divine will and might. The cause of Christianity would have appealed to the minds of millions who were offended by His humble life and His reliance for success upon His personality alone.

There have been times when the Church of Christ

has thought to improve on the methods of Christ for the advancement of the Kingdom of God. There have been times when good and well-meaning men have taken to the sword to convert men to the faith and thought that by worldly power and show they might best serve the cause of Christianity. We remember a Charlemagne, a Charles V., ruler of Church and State in the Holy Roman Empire, Charles IX., and numerous lesser lights in the history of the Church, who substituted the sword and the stake for the humble means of grace as a method of Christianizing the world. There are too many Christians in the world today who make the same mistake and substitute the glory of the world for the simplicity that is in Christ, "simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ," the crown of worldly might for the power of the Spirit, the mammon of this world for the manger of Bethlehem. Not long since, in a metropolitan newspaper, an individual called upon all ministers of the Gospel to substitute a more acceptable narrative of the birth of Christ in their Christmas sermons than that of St. Luke. Thus some are offended at the cross of Christ even as others are offended at the manger in Bethlehem.

This offense at the birth of Christ in sordid surroundings may be very human and easily explained, but it is not the way of God. God sees small difference in king and beggarman. They are alike to Him. He sees them as they are—sinners both of them. God makes no class or caste distinctions. Titles mean nothing to Him, and it would have been unworthy of Christ to deck Himself in royal garb and adorn His body with the paraphernalia of orders, medallions and ribbons. Even the best among men have shown their disregard for outward show and pretense assumed for the purpose of impressing the crowd. Socrates and Diogenes, Elijah and John the Baptist, St. Francis of Assisi and Huss, set no reliance upon wealth and worldly pomp for the furtherance of the Kingdom of God. God appraises a man by what he is in himself; as for titles and medals, power and riches,

standing and distinctions, all these are but external and transitory, superficial and misleading as to the real quality of a man before the judgments of God; only that which is of real and eternal value in man abides. Christ did not come to make laws for the Roman Empire, nor to inaugurate external social, political and economic reforms. The Roman Empire was shattered and its history is but a memory. Christ came to the world to save men from the greatest of all evils, from sin and death, and to create in their hearts a new spirit by the word of truth. For this reason He came as a man, a member of the human family, without royal acclaim, without high station, without titles, wealth and worldly dignities. Thus the apostle explains the birth in poverty: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich" (II Cor. 8:9).

In holy veneration and awe the apostle writes: "He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:7,8). His birth in poverty, His life in indigence, His disregard of the comforts and honors of this world, were all a part of His humiliation, and therefore a necessary element in His redemption of humanity. He bore the cross, not only on Calvary, but from His birth to His death. The burden that lay on His heart was not the renunciation of worldly power and magnificence, which well enough might have been His had He been untrue to His purpose in coming to the world, for legions of angels stood ready to do His bidding; but rather the sin and guilt of humanity, the scorn and contumely which was His lot, and the unbelief which met Him on every hand. Even after His resurrection the unbelief of His disciples caused Him to exclaim in the deep sorrow of His heart: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken; ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter

into His glory?" (Luke 24:25,26). Does the Son of Man in His glory still mourn over the unbelief and hard-heartedness of mankind as He wept over Jerusalem in the days of His humiliation? Oh, the love of God for a sinful world! Oh, the blindness of men as they reject that love manifested in the Christ of God!

Had Christ been a mighty potentate and surrounded Himself with worldly magnificence, feared and flattered for His greatness and power, what would ordinary humanity have said? Men would then have said: "It is easy enough for Him to preach the Kingdom of heaven and call upon us to imitate Him in His virtues and excellencies. When a man possesses everything his heart could wish, it is easy enough to tell the rest of us to be patient in our sufferings, our woes and wants, our poverty and wretchedness. Why should not such a man be good and kind, sinless and humane, when there is nothing to tempt him and lead him to that which is evil? Had He been subject to our trials and temptations, our cares and deprivations, it would have been impossible for Him to have led the pure and holy life which He led." That is about the tone in which common humanity would have talked about a Christ of worldly power and magnificence. And rightly so. For what of the poor, the neglected, the reprobate, the outcast, the despised among men? What of those who were most in need of a sympathizing friend, of those who most of all needed comfort and spiritual restoration? For humanity does not consist only of the rich and powerful, the learned and highly cultured, the refined and respectable, but of the millions and millions who know little or nothing of the refinements of life, whose lives are spent in the drudgery of toil and the trials which embitter the heart. What of the spiritually poor, the hopeless and despairing, the sinners with an evil conscience in the clutches of death and damnation?

Christ came to redeem a lost world. He came to satisfy the deepest cravings of the heart of humanity for purity and rest in God. How could a man in royal robes

and imperial grandeur pretend to meet the needs of sin-sick souls and open to them the way to mercy and forgiveness with God? He would be so grand and unapproachable, that common sinners would never dare to come near Him. But Jesus is the Friend of sinners, thank God! He ate and drank with them; He understood and sympathized with them, because He entered into the life of humanity, and knew how to help the needy. He knew the meaning of temptation, for we read: "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses" (Matt. 8:17). And again: "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). Christ is wholly human, even though in Him dwelt the fulness of the Godhead bodily. He condescended to men of low estate and was one of us that He might be our Friend indeed. He is brother to every man.

VI

THE GOD-MAN

"WHY must our Savior be true God?" The answer given in Luther's Catechism is as follows: "So that His death and blood could have infinite power of atonement." "Very well," you say, "but that reply is a piece of dogmatic theology, and all dogmatizing on religion is anathema to the modern mind." But a dogma is nothing more than the statement of a doctrine taught in the Bible based upon the authority of the Bible alone. Call the statement a dogma, a doctrine, or a teaching of the Bible, if you will. It matters not. What does matter is the truth of the assertion according to the analogy of faith. Questioning a dogma based upon the Scriptures, is therefore the equivalent of rejecting the Bible as the supreme authority in matters of faith. For unless the doctrinal statement reproduces the precise content of the Bible, it is no true dogma but a perversion of the Biblical truth. The catechism is right in saying that Christ must be true God, in order that His death might be a full atonement for the sin of the world. God only can forgive sin and blot out transgression. Even He can not forgive sin except in accordance with the principle of justice. But justice demands punishment for sin, and the wages of sin is death, eternal death. No one but God Himself could satisfy and thus remove that penalty from human guilt.

It is true that Jesus of Nazareth was the greatest teacher of ethics that ever lived. It is true that He was sinless and left us an example that we should walk in His steps. But He was something infinitely more than a teacher of morals and an example of holy living. He is above all the only-begotten Son of God, very God of very God. If He is not God incarnate, and you reduce Him to the level of a mere man and classify Him with

Socrates, Buddha, Confucius, Seneca and Cicero, then there is no Savior, no redemption from the guilt and the wages of sin; for no man can redeem his brother, "nor give to God a ransom for him" (Ps. 49:7). If the Spirit of God can not convince your spirit that the words of Christ are the words of eternal life, then *we* know that no human argument can move you. We may search high and low in the vast library of human opinion upon the vital subject of salvation from sin, guilt and eternal death, and we shall find as many theories as there are consultants. Not one of them can give a satisfactory answer to our query, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" In general, the superficial answer is: "You must atone for your sins by the improvement of your character," in other words, you must save your soul by good works. As if sin were nothing more than psychoneurosis, a spiritual ailment resulting from evolution, and to be cured by a moral gesture. Men are not saved from sin by dying on the battlefield.

Jesus Christ is true God, according to the Bible. The prophets of the Old Testament have thus spoken of Him. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Is. 9:6). Jesus says of Himself, "I and My Father are one" (John 10:30). "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). "Then said they all, Art Thou the Son of God? And He said unto them, Ye say that I am" (Luke 22:70). God Himself says: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). It will be noted also, that Jesus speaks of Himself as *the* Son of God, using the definite article, corresponding to that other expression: "the only-begotten Son of God." Christ is consequently not to be spoken of as *a* Son of God, as if He were one of many sons of God, on an equality. On the ground of His unique one-ness with God, Jesus demands that Divine honor be given Him: "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all

judgment unto the Son; that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent Him" (John 5:22, 23). He even utters this mighty pronouncement, closing the door to all unbelievers in Himself as the only-begotten Son of God from access to the heavenly Father: "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father, but by Me" (John 14:6). He said to the astounded Jews: "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58). He identifies Himself with Jehovah, who said to Moses: "I am that I am" (Ex. 3:14). Surrounded by His disciples, He prays: "And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was" (John 17:5), thus declaring in simple, plain language: *I am the Eternal God.* The Jews understood Him to make this claim, for we read: "For a good work we stone Thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that Thou, being a man, makest Thyself God" (John 10:33).

Jesus is God incarnate according to the testimony of all who really knew Him. "And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto Him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 16:16,17). Thomas said to Him, "My Lord and my God." John confesses: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . All things were made by Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made . . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:1,3,14). Writing of "the ministry of reconciliation," St. Paul says: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them" (II Cor. 5:19). Again: "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified by the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (I Tim. 3:16). To the Colossians the same apostle

writes: "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9). To his disciple Titus he writes: "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). To the Romans he writes: "Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen" (Rom. 9:5). St. John writes: "And now we know that the Son is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life" (I John 5:20). Can human language speak more plainly? How majestically the writer of Hebrews describes the Deity of Christ: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of *his* glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son *he saith,* Thy throne, O God, *is* for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness *is* the sceptre of thy kingdom" (Heb. 1:1-9).

After reading these and other cognate places, no honest mind will deny that the Bible teaches the unique deity of Jesus Christ. The only question is: Am I ready and willing to believe in Christ as the eternal, almighty God, incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth?

It stands to reason that God alone can restore a lost world. "By grace ye are saved" is the constant refrain of the Bible. It is a plain truth, easily understood. We live our physical lives solely by the grace of God. No one will dispute that axiomatic statement. Why not accept the parallel truth that we are saved by the grace of God? Not by works, not by the evolution of character through natural powers, but by grace are we saved. *We* are glad to believe that; for relying on our own endeavors, we should never feel quite sure that our righteousness would stand the test of God's omniscience. When we remember that "the righteous God trieth the heart and reins" of every man, and knows us better than we know ourselves, we hesitate to talk about the excellency of our lives and character as the adequate compensation for our sins. That is a game of hide-and-seek in which we dare not engage.

If men would try to understand the meaning of such Scripture terms as "redemption," "ransom," "bought with a price," and the like, they would gain a clearer conception of the damnable character of sin. For that is where the difficulty lies. Sin is something far more serious than a symptom of moral and spiritual deterioration; and salvation is something infinitely more than the natural evolution of character. If that were all that is meant by salvation, we might as well be followers of Buddha, Rabbi Hillel, Marcus Aurelius, or any other great and good man whose philosophy and system of ethics appealed to us. If the transgression of God's holy law were nothing more than an unavoidable symptom of evolution and therefore quite excusable and easily remedied, our own ideals of righteousness would suffice for salvation. But all such home-made character nostrums will get us nowhere. Sin remains nevertheless, and its unescapable corollary is death, that is, eternal separation from God.

Sin, and all humanity is saturated with it, is not a mere human weakness, but a deep-rooted perversion of the mind and will of man. It is transgression of the Law

of God. It is a vital fact, the result of the activity of the arch-enemy of God and man, Satan. Nor is this prince of darkness an abstract principle, a theory of evil. The Bible speaks of him as the Father of Lies, a personality, even as God, the Father of Lights, is a personality. He is called "the tempter" (II Sam. 24:1), "Beelzebub," "the prince of this world" (John 14:30), "the dragon," "the old serpent" (Rev. 20:2), and he is given other names. John Milton in *Paradise Lost,* calls him Lucifer, once an angel of heaven but through rebellion against God cast out together with a company of disobedient angels. Satan and his minions operate in a multitude of ways, and not least through the medium of human beings. Christ sends the converted persecutor of the Christians to the Gentiles, "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive the forgiveness of sins" (Acts 26:18).

As God loves all His creation and cares for it, so the devil hates God and His creatures and would destroy them together. Such is the doctrine of the Bible. "The devil is a murderer from the beginning" (John 8:44). The Son of God united Himself with mankind, "that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:14,15). The devil accuses believers "before God day and night" (Rev. 12:10). Satan deceives "the whole world" (Rev. 12:9). "Be sober, be vigilant," writes the apostle, "because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (I Peter 5:8).

What human being ever had the power to overcome Satan, who has the power of death? How could Jesus Christ, if He had been a mere man, have overcome the mighty enemy of God and man? The First Adam, man only, fell before the onslaught of the devil; the Second Adam, God and man, met him, as David met Goliath, and overcame him. "But when a stronger than he shall come

upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him his armor wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils" (Luke 11:22), Christ says of Himself as the stronger who overcomes Satan. Thank God, the Spirit of Evil, the devil, was met and overcome by God Himself in the person of Christ Jesus, the Divine Man. Or is there no escape from the power of the devil? Is there no redemption from sin, guilt and damnation? Is humanity forever doomed? Sin stands as a black mark against every soul born into this world, and all the argumentation in the world can not cleanse the soul from guilt. But sin means estrangement from God, the Holy Spirit; and estrangement from God spells death.

History proves that outside of the Christian faith the best among men have been ineffectual as compared with Christ in translating men and nations from sin and degradation to righteousness and decency. If Christian nations, as we are pleased to call them, at times are savage and inhuman, the fault does not lie with Christianity, but clearly with the people themselves, who are defective in their practice of the Christian doctrine. If they were truly Christian, righteousness would dwell in the land, and justice and equity among the nations.

The best of men are not free from the common frailties of mankind; they are sinners, like the rest of us; it requires no muckraking to establish that fact. Yet in spite of the hostility of men in every age, no fault has been found in Jesus Christ. He stands out in all the welter of humanity as the only sinless, pure and holy One. Your Buddhas, Augustines, Mohammeds, Nietzsches, Washingtons, Bismarcks, and Napoleons, great as they may bulk in the history of mankind, are after all but ethical and spiritual rushlights in comparison with Him who is the Light of the world.

In Jesus Christ dwelt the fullness of the Godhead bodily. That fact is demonstrated by His universally beneficent influence in the lives of millions of men and in the history of the nations. By faith in Him men are turned from bestial living to purity and moral cleanli-

ness, from brutality to mercy and humaneness, from barbarism to civilization. His influence is seen not only in the external visible Church but also in thousands of eleemosynary institutions and social agencies throughout the world, which, though not designating themselves as specifically Christian, are nevertheless motivated by the spirit of Jesus Christ. A Community Fund of one million three hundred thousand dollars recently gathered during one week in a mid-western city of half a million population for the benefit of the poor and needy members of the community is a demonstration of the power of Christ to move the hearts of men.

But God be praised forever and ever! He has redeemed humanity, purchased and won mankind from the power of the devil. God is supreme, *after* all, and in the person of Christ Jesus the Evil One has been robbed of his illgotten spoils; in Christ we are set free of his power. For we read: "Being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8). No sooner had He said, in the throes of death and damnation, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" than He triumphantly proclaimed, "It is finished." And while, with the apostle, "we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now," we also know that it waits in hope for restoration to its original perfection in the regeneration which is to be. Even nature is not to be left in the ruin wrought by Satan. It, too, shall be renewed. There shall be a new heaven and a new earth. And the blessed company of the angels of heaven are not singing of the glories of the Roman Empire or of the British Empire, or of the exploits of this great man or that patriotic hero, or of the results of science and inventions, or of the triumphs of civilization and the moral development of humanity; all of that is too imperfect a theme for the grand symphony before the Throne of God. And this is the new song: "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed

us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on earth." And again the voice of many angels shall be lifted up in praise, saying: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." And every living creature in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, shall join in saying: "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever" (Rev. 5:9,12,13).

VII

THE SUFFERING SAVIOR

"NEVERTHELESS," some one may object, "if Jesus Christ was true God and true man in one personality, it must have been an easy matter for Him to endure the sufferings ascribed to Him in the narrative of His life and death. God surely cannot suffer pain, since He is a Spirit. Since God was in Christ, the human in Christ must have been so permeated with the Divine, that what we know as pain must have been entirely absent from His soul and body, at least the suffering must have been so mitigated and modified as to be easily endured."

An objection of that sort naturally brings us into metaphysics, and Divine psychology at that. Hence it is not for us to speculate upon the dual nature of Christ and the reflex influence which that dual nature exerted upon itself. We can only accept and believe that which is written in the story of His agony. He was scourged, smitten, and afflicted, crowned with thorns, and nailed to the cross, we read. He had cried in the agony of His soul: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." He had prayed in Gethsemane: "If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." In the unfathomable loneliness of His heart, He had cried: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" All that and much more in connection with the life and death of Jesus certainly is the expression of the most intense pain of body, soul and spirit. There is no mitigation of His sufferings either in the prophecies or in the New Testament fulfillment of them.

It is furthermore a law of nature that the higher and more refined an organism is, the greater is its suffering and the greater its joy. The lowest forms of animal life show a callousness to suffering which almost makes one believe that they have no feeling of pain or at best but

a dull sensitiveness to pain. On the other hand, the more refined a human being is the more keenly it feels both mental and physical suffering. We shudder to read about the tortures inflicted by a Torquemada or a Ximenes upon innocent victims of their hatred, and our horror is increased in proportion to the mental and physical refinement of the one over the other.

We remember that the Eternal Word made flesh did not bring with Him an earthly body from heaven, but that He was "made of a woman," with material flesh and bone, muscles and tendons, a nervous system and all that that implies, and that therefore the human part of Him was by no means Divine, however physically perfect. Since, therefore, His soul was not contaminated with sin, nor His body ruined by vice, nor His mind darkened by evil imaginings, it follows of necessity that His human nature was highly sensitized and responsive to the slightest impressions of good and evil. How deeply He felt the sorrows of mankind we can never know; but we can at least readily understand that His sufferings were far more excruciating than those ever visited upon any ordinary human being; for in truth He bore the punishment of all the sins of humanity in His sacred body on the tree. Whoever believes the truth of the Word of God which declares, "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth up" (Gen. 8:21), and the truth of the confession of the prophet, "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness as filthy rags" (Is. 64:6), whoever realizes at least in some measure the deep damnation of sin the world over, the ocean of tears, the blighting siroccos of hatred, the mire of lasciviousness and the tyranny of Satan in the heart of the unregenerate man, will also understand that none but God Almighty Himself could lift mankind out of the cess-pool of evil in which it naturally wallows. Let no man cry, "Pessimism," and let no man try to explain away the truth of sin in the world by smooth phraseology! Epithets do not alter facts, nor does denial of demonstrable truth profit any-

one. The ostrich with his head in the sand is no more foolish than is the man who denies the reality of universal and individual sin.

The modern tendency to deny emotions and feelings in God is closely allied to the agnosticism which knows no personal God. This tendency makes of God a nebulous, abstract Being far removed from the affairs of men. According to the modern tendency, feelings, emotions and passions, like hatred and love, retributive justice and jealousy, are unworthy attributes of God, and not compatible with the idea of God. God is at best an idea, a force, an energy, practically interchangeable with the idea of nature itself. But an absolute, inorganic Being can have no feelings or emotions. In some fashion the laws of nature have been set in motion and the Supreme Being, like Buddha, sinks into a sort of lethargy, taking no interest in mankind and its doings. Miracles are out of question since the laws of nature work automatically and can not be interrupted.

However, if God is not capable of hatred, neither is He capable of love. For both are emotions. "Brethren" writes the apostle, "I speak after the manner of men" (Gal. 3:15), and he likens the promise of the Spirit through faith to the covenant which God had made with Abraham. Similarly, the Scriptures everywhere speak after the manner of men. So Jesus teaches by parables and pictures, even as children are taught. We can not conceive of God except as a concrete individuality, with emotions, will and mind. An impersonal God is inconceivable. We can not pray to an abstract idea, nor can we fear or love a God who neither loves nor hates. We cannot know such an idea, nor can we hope anything from it. All we can do is to arrange our lives as best we may according to the laws of nature as we find them, and satisfy our souls with the scientific discoveries in matter, motion, light and electricity. For there can be no morality in man if there is neither approval nor disapproval in God with the manner of man's life.

Again, how can Christ suffer and die for sinners?

How can the Just One bear the penalties rightly imposed upon the unjust? In that same connection, how can the righteousness of Christ be imputed to the penitent and believing sinner? As a matter of justice, must not the sinner suffer for his own sins? Must he not of necessity die in his own sins? These and similar questions press forward in contemplating the marvellous Scripture teaching of justification by faith alone.

The history of mankind is filled with examples of self-sacrifice for others. A mother gives her life for her child, a man for his wife, a friend for a friend, a soldier for his people. Is there anything unreasonable or unethical in such an act of devotion? Arnold Winkelried gathered the spear points of the enemy against his own breast in order to make a breach in the serried ranks of the Austrians for his Swiss nationals to enter the lines and overcome the enemies of his country. Was it not a reasonable act? A man signs a note for a friend as security for its payment; the friend is unable to pay the obligation, possibly through his own fault, and the endorser is called upon to pay the note. Is there anything unfair or unethical in his payment of the obligation? A poor man owes a thousand dollars, which he sees no way of paying; a rich man says to the creditor: "Here is my check for a thousand dollars, and I want you to apply the amount for the liquidation of the poor man's indebtedness." Is there anything unethical in that act of beneficence?

Now Christ comes and says: "You are indebted to My heavenly Father in such an amount that you can not pay it. Let me pay your indebtedness, and, by way of recompense, you are to be Mine for time and eternity." Is there anything unjust in such an act of self-sacrifice? They who are thus ransomed are at liberty to accept or reject the gracious offer. The sinner who accepts the offer of Christ's atonement for his sins is thereby freed from the condemnation; he who rejects it retains the burden and guilt of sin upon his own soul in eternity.

It is therefore as irrational to question the atonement of Christ for sin as it is absurd to question its imputation to the penitent and believing soul. We are reconciled to God through faith in the suffering and dying Son of God.

If it is ethical for a friend to die for a friend, it certainly is in consonance with righteousness for God to make the sacrifice of His Son for us while we were yet His enemies. Here we stand at the very ocean of God's love. No human intelligence is able to fathom such love. Why should God send His Son to suffer and die on the cross for His enemies? The only possible answer is: "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son" to suffer the penalty of our sin "in His own body on the tree."

VIII

HE DIED FOR US

SCRIPTURE doctrine, then, regarding the atonement wrought by the suffering and death of Jesus Christ for the sins of mankind is clear and unmistakable. "God commendeth His love toward us," writes the apostle, "in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Rom. 5:8-10). "We were reconciled to God by the death of His Son," states concisely the manner of the atonement. The cross on Calvary epitomizes the atonement and the means of our reconciliation with God. The same doctrine is taught consistently throughout the Old and New Testaments. Any deviation from that plain and clear doctrine is un-Scriptural and un-Christian. We are not reconciled to God by any other means or in any other manner than by the blood of the Son of God. The rationalism which attempts to explain away or obfuscate the outstanding Scriptural doctrine of the atonement made by Christ is indefensibly un-Scriptural and intellectually dishonest.

"But," says some one, "how can the death of Christ atone for my sins? How can the Son of God bear my guilt? How can a guilty sinner be rendered innocent by the death of the Guiltless One? Furthermore, what justice is there in punishing one for the sins of another?" May I remind the questioner that such concepts as "sin," "guilt," "justice," "death," "personality," "soul," "righteousness," are far beyond our comprehension in their eternal and mysterious bearing. Our vision is limited; we see as in a glass, darkly. If we are rational, we

will admit our limitations, and rather believe what God reveals to our benighted minds regarding spiritual truth.

A soldier dies on the field of battle for his country. A mother dies for her child, a man for his wife, a friend for his friend. An officer sees a battle being lost through an error of the commanding general; with his regiment he throws himself into the gap and is killed, but the army is saved and the battle won. What injustice has been done? A man is indebted to another away beyond any hope or prospect of repaying the loan. A third party comes to the creditor and says: "Here is your money, cancel the loan, and give the debtor a receipt for payment in full of his obligation." What is wrong about that transaction? Is not history replete with sacrifice for others? Jesus Christ comes and says to men: "Your indebtedness to My heavenly Father is so great that you will not be able to pay it in all eternity. I have paid the price for your release, and you are forever free." What is there to object to such a ransom? Is it not reasonable? Is it not fair enough? True, we shall never comprehend with our limited minds how the sufferings and death of the Son of God as our substitute could come about, but the offer, the message of redemption is clear enough. And that is all we really need to understand. Who shall find out God, and who shall explain His mysterious ways? "Ye are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ," says the apostle (I Peter 1:19).

The sacrificial nature of the death of Christ has been universally confessed in the creeds of Christendom. His death has been interpreted as the all-sufficient sacrifice for the sin and guilt of mankind. There were sacrifices ordained by Jehovah in the Old Dispensation as atonement for sin, under various forms, and yet all these offerings were but types and foreshadowings of the supreme sacrifice wrought by the Son of God upon the cross of Golgatha. There were burnt offerings and peace offerings and meal offerings and meat offerings and sin-offerings and incense offerings, and other offerings; but these all were of no avail, says Jehovah, except as they

were accompanied by repentance and faith in the expiation to be made through the suffering and death of the Messiah as promised in the Garden of Eden, and through the centuries by the holy prophets. When the fulness of time had come by the decree of God, Christ also "once suffered for sins, the Just for the un-just, that He might bring us to God" (I Peter 3:18).

There is therefore in the Scriptures no place for the idea of an incomplete or imperfect satisfaction for sin through the death of Christ. There is no place for the theory that Christ bore the eternal penalty for the inherited sinfulness of man, but that man must make atonement for actual sins committed after Baptism and endure temporal penalties for such sins. "It is finished," are the words of Christ; and no man can add any merit or righteousness to the satisfaction which Christ has made for all the sin of mankind. His redemption is complete, and needs no supplementary addition in the form of human merit or work-righteousness. Neither saints nor angels possess any superfluous righteousness to be applied to the penitent soul beside the righteousness of Christ and Him crucified. The redemption which is in Christ Jesus is a complete redemption; it needs no addition of human merit in heaven or on earth.

IX

THE ONE ALTOGETHER LOVELY

INTELLECTUAL objections may be removed, however, and the way made plain to belief in Jesus Christ as the Divine-human Savior of the world, and yet the profound mystery of His deity may prove too hard to believe. It was this claim that set the Jews against Him, and this is the rock of offense to the minds of men today. Men can not be argued into a living faith in Christ as God Incarnate in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. After all, faith is the gift of God to man, even as Christ Himself is God's unspeakable gift.

But truly He is the One altogether lovely! Reverently paraphrasing the words of Scotland's great poet, we would say:

> *"But to see Him is to love Him,*
> *Love but Him, and love forever."*

For even in His humiliation the glory of God shone through His words and works. There has been none like Him on earth, and to millions down through the ages He has been more precious than all else in the world. If by seeing Him, we learn to know Him, we shall love Him. If we seek the truth as to ourselves and as to God, we shall realize that He is the truth and has revealed the truth to men. He says to every seeker after the truth: "Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice" (John 18:37).

Faith in Christ is a mysterious experience, and like every mystery not to be explained as to its origination. It is God's creation in a man's mind. Jesus said to Nicodemus regarding the great subject of regeneration: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound

thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth;" and the same may be said of faith in Christ. It comes to a man, if it comes at all, in a sub-conscious, inexplicable way, as comes the tender shoot out of the dark ground into the light of day. As to the means by which faith is created in the mind, there can be no question. Always and in every instance faith is wrought by means of God's Word and Sacraments. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Seeing Christ as He is portrayed in the Scriptures and hearing His Word will lead the seeker after God to believe in Christ as the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

While it is true that there was no comeliness or beauty in the Son of Man, scourged, smitten and crowned with thorns, a prisoner sentenced to death, nevertheless He was sinless. We love others for their good qualities, their amiability, their integrity, their love of us. But that is not saying that they are faultless and without sin. Their virtues and moral excellencies are after all but relative, as are all the good qualities in human beings. They are not perfect, by any means. They may love the truth, but are not always absolutely truthful in speech and manner. They may love us, but their love is often imperfect in character. Christ was absolutely truthful, absolutely unselfish, absolutely self-sacrificing. How completely His disciples trusted Him and relied upon Him!

To be sure, His very presence must have been an offense to men whose hearts were filled with uncleanness, hatred, arrogance and selfishness. If it is true that ungodly men are uncomfortable in the presence of pure-minded, clean and honorable men, how much more must this have been the case of such men in the presence of the absolutely pure and holy Christ! They doubtless felt like crying with the devils: "What have we to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of God? Art Thou come hither to torment us before the time?" (Matt. 8:29). His holy personality aroused the hatred of self-righteous sinners. His presence was a condemnation of such people; a judg-

ment upon their hearts and lives; a two-edged sword dividing between good and evil to their consternation. Either they learned to repent of their evil lives and bow in confession before Him; or they were angered and took up stones to kill Him. No one could avoid taking sides for or against Him. He made that definite declaration Himself. "He that is not with Me is against Me."

Then again, He spake as one having authority. When the officers of the law came to arrest Jesus, they explained to the Pharisees why they had failed to do so by saying: "Never man spake like this man" (John 7:46). Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, "came to Jesus by night, and said unto Him, Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him" (John 3:2). Many other instances could be cited from the Gospels to show that His Divine glory shone through the gloom of His humiliation; there was Divine authority in His words and works. Even the rough Roman soldiers, who had come to take Him in the garden of Gethsemane, recognized Him as a supernatural being, for we read: "As soon as He had said, I am He, they went backward, and fell to the ground" (John 17:6). And this same Jesus speaks with authority to the world today. Not only His devout followers but the whole Christian world recognizes the authority with which Jesus speaks to the hearts and consciences of men.

"What is truth?" was the question put to Jesus by the Roman procurator, and that is the perennial question of all humanity. Men everywhere ask this same question. What is the truth about the origin and destiny of man? Who can tell us? Who can show the way out of the wilderness? Where is the guidance, the leadership to the truth after which all humanity seeks? And men rush about, singly and in groups, to find, if possible, some authority to which they can pin their faith in religion, morals, social science, and what not. Who can speak with authority in these fields of human research? In sheer despair some find authority for their faith or

lack of faith in this sage or that marvel of wisdom, only to discover that their authority breaks down and is not dependable. History, like the sea, carries on its bosom or buried in its depths the wreckage, the flotsam and jetsam, of many a theory which pretended to be the final truth. Men were disappointed and the fine ship foundered or was eventually scuttled for lack of seaworthiness.

In Jesus Christ His disciples, millions of them down through the ages, have found the answer to the question, What is truth? They found an authority which carries its own demonstration, as does the sun at noonday. The sun needs no evidence, scientific or otherwise, to prove that it actually shines on the earth and drives away the darkness. We may close our eyes to the sun, but it shines just the same. Jesus Christ not only teaches men the truth—He is the truth. Whatever He said, whatever He did, whether speaking to the individual or to thousands, the unavoidable impression was that He spake and acted with Divine authority. "They were all astonished," we read again and again, at His words and works. For He commended Himself to the minds of men as the absolute and final truth. All who were of the truth and honestly longed for the truth, rejoiced to find in Him Divine assurance of the truth.

Jesus was courageous. We all admire the man of undaunted courage, the man who does his duty in the face of death and danger. We applaud the man who risks his life to save others. Jesus was fearless. There were times and occasions when He avoided danger and death, but the reason in every case was that His time had not come. When the time came, according to the will of His heavenly Father, He set His face to go to Jerusalem to suffer the death which He knew there awaited Him. The fact that in the garden of Gethsemane He sweat great drops of blood, and exclaimed, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even into death," and in anguish prayed, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me," is but evidence of His perfect human nature which

shuddered at the thought of the tortures that awaited Him. "Nevertheless," He instantly added, "not My will but Thine be done." He obeyed the Father's will in the face of anguish of soul and body such as no human being ever encountered. But whether surrounded by an angry mob bent on stoning Him to death, or confronting the murderous Pharisees and their minions; whether tossed about with His disciples in a frail skiff on the angry waves of the sea; or left to perish in the deserts, there was no fear in Him: He was safe in the Father's hands; His mind was always tranquil and fearless. How safe and secure the disciples felt in His presence!

Then, too, He was unchangeable and evinced no moods of impatience and irritability. There are occasions when a good man loses his temper, as we say, and breaks out in angry reproach against his associates and even his intimate friends. There were no such moods in Jesus. He was always the same, loving, kind, and infinitely patient. There were times when He spoke and acted in Divine wrath against sin and hypocrisy, but never in the spirit of human anger: His verbal castigation of men for their sin was in reality an expression of the love of God for erring and unbelieving humanity. "No man is a hero to his valet," some one has said. No great man, however talented and honored among men, but has his weaknesses, his shortcomings in one direction or another. History has sadly demonstrated that fact. Our youthful ideals regarding many of the great and good in the story of mankind have been shattered by the revelation to us of the seamy side of their character. On closer knowledge of their personalities and their daily lives our idealistic portraits of them have been ruined. Before the world they have posed as exemplary and even immaculate in character; but in reality they were frail and erring and sometimes even grossly vile in private life. Jesus could challenge His enemies: "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" (John 8:46). With Him purity and uprightness were no stage-play. He was no actor, no pretender. "He thought it not robbery to be equal with

God," for He was God. Whether He washed the feet of His disciples, teaching them the lesson of humble service, or He uttered the high words, "Ye call Me Master and Lord; and ye say well; for so I am" (John 13:13), no one would think of charging Him with false humility or unwarranted arrogance. What human being would dare to say what He said? He was, however, what He said He was, entirely and absolutely. And the day came when in firm conviction the disciples said: He is the truth, the very truth of God, for He is God.

Another quality which characterizes Jesus is goodness. He was good, kind and sympathetic. Not negatively only, in that He was sinless and never said or did anything wrong or unkind. No, He was positively, actively, and mercifully good. His goodness was essential, genuine and true, as He was consistently true to His Divine-human nature. Who was ever so kind and sympathizing as Jesus? He healed the sick, fed the hungry, comforted the mourners, eased burdened consciences, and filled men's hearts with the joy of forgiveness and the hope of heaven. When He said to the troubled disciples, "My peace I leave unto you," their hearts were comforted, not as men try to comfort in empty phraseology and helpless sympathy, but by actually conveying the help and peace which the needy heart craved. "Blessed are the poor in spirit," He said; "for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven" (Matt. 5:3,4,6,11,12). With such words, bringing with them the blessed consciousness of forgiveness and peace with God, the mourners, the despairing and weary went their way rejoicing.

With spiritual blessings went also the physical restorations. He opened the eyes of the blind, unstopped the ears of the deaf, loosened the tongue of the dumb, cleans-

ed the lepers and mourned with those who mourned, always kind, sympathetic and mighty to help. "Be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee," He said to the sick of the palsy (Matt. 9:2). "Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more" (John 8:11), He said to the woman "taken in adultery." How He could heal the bruised heart and restore to the despairing the joy of salvation!

How good and kind He was in dealing with His disciples! How mercifully He bears with their many shortcomings, their weaknesses, and their disagreeable traits! They were sinful beings such as we are, full of faults in their daily lives. But Jesus was patient with the excitable and impetuous Peter, as He was long-suffering even with the treacherous Judas. "Friend," He said to him, "betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" (Luke 22:48). Was He still trying to win the evil heart of Judas at the very moment of his treachery?

There was much in the lives of the disciples which the Master might have censured. They were slow to believe on Him; they lacked the spiritual conception of Him and the Kingdom which He had come to establish; they could not rid themselves of the common Jewish idea, that the Messiah was to appear with worldly pomp and restore to Israel the glory of the days of David and Solomon; they were personally ambitious for high honors and position in the world, they quarreled among themselves; they were ungrateful. But Jesus does not upbraid them in harsh, impatient language for their weaknesses. On the contrary, even in His correction of them, His language is always that of Divine love and infinite patience. And His complaint is in every instance that they were "slow of heart to believe on Him." It grieved His soul to see how imperfect was their confidence in Him as the Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the Glory of Israel, the chosen people of God. Their spiritual density, their unstable love for Him, their worldly mindedness and sordid view of the Kingdom which He preached —these were the blemishes above all which caused Him heart-sorrow and which He endeavored to remove.

And when in their sore disappointment by the near approach of His crucifixion they were down-hearted and despondent, how lovingly He deals with them, and that in the hour when humanly speaking He needed their faith and love most of all: "Let not your heart be troubled," He says comfortingly, "ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions . . . I go to prepare a place for you. . . . I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." He had said to them on another occasion: "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends: for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you" (John 15:15). As a friend comforts and cheers his broken-hearted friend, so Jesus comforts His disciples. He would leave them for a while, but He would return and take them to Himself and they would be with Him forever. He had been their Master, Friend, Brother, Comforter and Messiah, and we can readily understand that when He appeared to them after the resurrection, "they yet believed not for joy, and wondered." They could not believe their own eyes!

See how kindly He deals with Peter, who in the manner of a poltroon had denied Him thrice. Does He upbraid him as an ordinary human being would have done? Do we hear Him say: Did I not tell you that you would deny Me? Did you not say that though the other disciples would leave Me, you would not, you would even die for Me? Do you remember that? That is what happens when a person is so cocksure and trusts to his own powers in the day of temptation. Let it be a lesson to you. Let it be a warning for the future? We hear nothing of the kind. He utters no word about the apostle's defection. What a lesson in psychology to every pastor and Christian friend in dealing with repentant sinners! What did the Master? Three times the disciple had denied Him. Three times Jesus asked him, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?" And

when in deepest penitence the disciple had affirmed his love, Jesus restores him to the apostleship and three times gives him the great commission, "Feed My sheep." No word of upbraiding, no word of bitter reproach or rebuke! How the heart of Peter must have dissolved in deepest repentance and shame! He had wept for his heinous sin of unfaithfulness to the Lord; now he must have wept for unspeakable joy over the forgiveness of his sin and the investment by Jesus Himself with the apostleship. He never forgot this evidence of more than human love, and gave his life in testimony of his love for the Master.

Jesus was the ideal man, the perfect human being. He was ethically what we all might have been had not sin entered into the world and destroyed the image of God in which man was originally created. He left us an example that we should follow in His steps. His holy life of love to God and man shows by contrast how far we all have drifted from the ideal which He has set for all mankind. What a caricature of the image of God is even the best of men! In Jesus surely dwelt the Godhead bodily.

X

JESUS, THE WORD OF GOD TO MANKIND

BUT CHRIST was not only the Ideal Man, the Perfect Man, He was also the Logos, the Word, which was from the beginning with God, and was God. In this fact lies the greatness of Christ. God is identified with the Word: God is the Word, the Word is God. So we identify men with their words. We read Shakespeare, Goethe, Dante, Ibsen, meaning that we read their words. The words are the man, the man is his word, the expression of his soul, himself. As by His Word God created the heavens and the earth, so man by his word destroys cities, enacts laws, rules nations, declares war, makes peace, and does immeasurable good or evil. Even human words are living things. A man's intelligence, conscience, will and soul, in fact his entire personality is immanent in his words. The word and the man are the same thing. So completely is a man identified with his words, that Jesus reminds us: "For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matt. 12:37). Every word is an act, good or bad. As a pebble dropped in a pond creates a ripple that moves on until it reaches the shore-line, so every word of man sets forces in motion which never stop till they reach the shores of eternity. No man can measure the eternal results of his words. We are dull and slow of understanding, but God is not; and He will hold us accountable for every idle word we have spoken.

"My words shall not pass away," says Christ. "If a man love Me" He says, "he will keep My words." At John 14:21-24, Jesus uses such expressions as "My words," "My commandments," "My sayings," interchangeably, identifying them with Himself. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away." The words of God are far more important than

are His miracles. "They have Moses and the prophets," says Christ to Dives in torment interceding for his brothers still on earth, "let them hear them." Jesus assures the marvelling Nathanael, "Thou shalt see greater things than these." The spiritual miracles wrought by the Word of God are of far greater significance than are the purely physical miracles. The apostle Peter does not say: We follow Thee on account of the miracle which Thou dost perform; but what does he say? "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." "The more sure Word of prophecy" is the conveyor of the Spirit of God with power to convert the soul, and therefore of infinitely greater value than are miracles. For God is in His Word, and by the Word He comes in contact with the souls of men, and draws them to Himself. That is more than a physical miracle can do. Thus judgment is passed upon all who shout with the unbelieving Jews: "Show us a miracle, and we will believe Thee." "Neither will they believe though one should rise from the dead," is a truth which should forever put an end to the silly demand for physical miracles as the condition of faith in Christ. The salvation of a soul is, humanly speaking, a far greater miracle than the raising of the dead.

What do we think of Christ? Whose Son is He? If the question were put to us, we should answer unhesitatingly: Christ is the Son of God, incarnate in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. And then we would add furthermore: This we fully believe, chiefly on the basis of the Old and the New Testaments, but also on the basis of His influence in the hearts and lives of hundreds of millions of men during the past nineteen centuries. Jesus Christ is not only a prophet sent from God, but He is God manifest in the flesh. How otherwise could God manifest Himself as the merciful Father, who loves all His human children, than by uniting Himself with humanity and thus as one of the race bearing the burden of guilt for all of them? Through the glittering stars and the charted and uncharted universe above us and around us, we con-

clude that there is a God, and that He is almighty, wise and majestic beyond human conception; but that is not what we want to know. His power and purity, His majesty and glory, fill us with awe and terror, but there is fear enough in our consciences already. We know that we are damned to alienation from God on account of our sins, and we also know that we want to be with God and not separated from Him. But the glistening stars can not remove our guilt, nor can the rains of heaven wash away our iniquities, nor penitential tears our transgressions. For we have sinned against God, and His forgiveness can alone speak peace to our weary hearts. And because Christ does this very thing, suffers for our sins and pronounces the remission of sins to our hearts as from God Himself, we are satisfied. We need no other God, no other revelation of the heart of God. If Jesus Christ is not sufficiently God to you, who or what is God? We care no whit for a god who is great and powerful and glorious and majestic alone. We must have a God who reveals Himself unmistakably also as forgiving and compassionate with our sins and iniquities.

Jesus spoke the words of eternal life, and therefore His coming in the flesh was the dawn of a new day in the history of mankind. Where is now the mighty Roman emperor Tiberius, before whom the world trembled in terror? What has become of the great Roman empire? What of Caligula and Nero and Domitian and Vespasian and all those great ones of ancient times? What are they but historical nonentities, wrapped up mummies in the morgue of the past. But away off in an obscure province of the empire one of the emperor's unknown subjects stood upon a mountain side addressing a multitude of grateful hearers, and this is what He said: "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven. . . . Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled. . . . Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted. . . . Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For

your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things," and He pointed to the lilies of the field, how they grew, and to the birds of the air, how God provided for their wants. And while Tiberius and his great men are of no account in the world, dead and ineffective, the sayings of Jesus are today as ever the words which bring life eternal to the hearts of men. His Gospel of salvation is proclaimed from one end of the earth to the other, from tens of thousands of pulpits. His sayings, scattered like seed over the field of human need by millions of copies of the Bible, in scores of languages, comforting the cheerless, healing the spiritual wounds of men, strengthening the weak, and helping men everywhere to believe in the loving care of the heavenly Father.

Since Jesus teaches all men to regard God, not as an abstract idea, or an impersonal energy that holds the universe together, but as their Father in heaven, a personal, loving, almighty God, interested in all that He has created, without whose will not a sparrow falls to the ground, He also teaches men how to approach God in prayer, praise and thanksgiving. So He teaches all who would be taught to pray in the manner of the model prayer, known as The Lord's Prayer, a prayer so simple that a child can understand it, and yet so profound that the most learned of men can not fathom it. In the Lord's Prayer are comprised all the needs of men, both of body and soul, for the life that now is and for that which is to come. A Christian never wearies of reciting that prayer; no public divine worship is complete without it. It carries the soul as on wings up to the very throne of God.

"Our Father, who art in heaven." Blest is the soul who thus can come to God as the Father in heaven. What need of fear? What need of doubt and misgiving? High above the sordidness of earth, its muddled notions of God, its gropings after the Unknown, the needy heart comes confidently to the God who is above all gods and talks with Him as a child with its father. Was there ever

a more beautiful and comforting explanation of the Introduction to the Lord's Prayer than that given in Luther's Catechism? "God would hereby tenderly invite us to believe that He is truly our Father and that we are truly His children, so that, with all confidence and cheerfulness, we may ask of Him; even as little children ask of their affectionate loving father." And that is the way Jesus wants us to approach the great "I AM," the eternal Creator, before whose throne of majesty the cherubim and seraphim, the multitude of mighty angels cry one to another, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord: the whole earth is full of His glory." Jesus teaches us that we poor mortals may also crowd the gates of heaven and pray to Him who says: "Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool." Jesus teaches us to mourn our distresses and make our petitions known in the palace of the King. No wonder the common people loved Him who led them up the golden steps to the Throne of God.

Jesus teaches us first of all to pray for the hallowing of God's Name, the coming of His kingdom, and the doing of His will on earth. In our prayers our thoughts and aspirations should, therefore, first be concerned with the magnifying of the name of God. Thereupon we may be concerned about the things spiritual and material which we need day by day. It will be noted that such is the arrangement also in the Ten Commandments. The first three commandments concern the glory of God; the last seven our relation to ourselves and our fellowmen.

Jesus teaches that "men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1). As He was instant in prayer, in season and out of season, so should our hearts and minds always be attuned to prayer, in other words, filled with faith and trust in God. "He continued all night in prayer to God" we read. Prayer was the habitual occupation of the apostles and the early Christians, as the Acts and the Epistles amply testify. Nor can we pray as we ought by our own natural reason and strength, according to the teaching of Jesus. He sends His Holy Spirit, who is called the Spirit of prayer, to instruct us

in the art of prayer. "We know not," writes the apostle, "what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom. 8:26). And the Spirit teaches us to base our petitions to God upon the merits of Jesus Christ as our Savior. Without such faith in the atonement wrought by Christ, our prayers are not Christian prayers. "Verily, verily, I say unto you," such are the words of the Master, "Whatsover ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you" (John 16:23). As He prayed, so should we pray. But the prayers of Jesus always breathed submission to the will of His heavenly Father. "Not My will, but Thine be done"; that spirit is characteristic of true prayer always.

There are prayers and aspirations in the heart of every man, no matter how far these petitions may be removed from the kind of prayer which Jesus teaches. For every man realizes that he is in the hands of some greater power, and that he is not the master of himself and his own life. He comes up against conditions and circumstances in life which are beyond his powers to overcome and which threaten to destroy him. In the time of trouble men seek after God. But their prayers are untutored, foolish, and misdirected. Truly, we know not how to pray as we ought. What sense is there in addressing our prayers to an impersonal, abstract idea, which we call the Absolute, the Unknowable One, Cosmic Energy, or some such nebulous philosophical notion? No man can pray to the universe. But every man can by the Spirit of God pray to the Creator of the universe. There is sense in praying to God Almighty, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and our Father. There one has something tangible, something concrete, far more real and concrete than many people imagine. Who dares to draw the line between the material and the immaterial? Who shall tell us that the invisible is not as really material as is that which is visible to our dull eyes? At all events, Jesus teaches us to pray to God as our sympathizing heavenly Father. That is far better for the soul that thirsts after God than

telling him to pray to electro-magnetism or cosmic energy.

Jesus teaches us that we may bring our little personal affairs to the Father who is in heaven: prayers for our daily bread, including, as the word signifies, all that we need for this daily life, food, clothing, home, friends, food for our intellectual life, and so on *ad infinitum;* the forgiveness of our sins, love for all mankind, protection against the wiles of the devil, and deliverance from all evil. And all this on the certitude that to God belongs the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory, forever and ever. And the Spirit of God assures us that God will hear every true prayer. Amen, surely, truly, my prayer will be heard.

Could Seneca have taught mankind such a prayer? Or Marcus Aurelius? Or Plato? Or Socrates? Or Locke? Or David Hume? Or Darwin? Not all the wise and good men in the history of the world could have fashioned anything approaching the Lord's Prayer. For that prayer alone we would not hesitate to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. The Spirit of the living God is in that prayer; and this we assert, not because of its beautiful form and comprehensive content, nor because we are used to it, but because the Spirit of God bears witness with our spirit that the Man who taught humanity that prayer breathed into it the Eternal Spirit of the Living God.

XI

PARABLES AND MIRACLES

"IN His parables," says Rev. Albert Barnes in his commentary on St. Matthew, "as in all His instructions, Jesus excelled all men in the purity, importance, and sublimity of His doctrine." "And He spake many things unto them in parables," says Matthew, in introducing a long series of parables uttered by Jesus (Matt. 13:3). In fact, the parable was His favorite method of imparting moral and spiritual truth. The parable is a likeness, a comparison, a placing side by side of that which is natural with that which is spiritual. It is a story bringing into strong relief some great spiritual truth or truths. It teaches spiritual truth to the densest minds, making its appeal to them through the senses. It may convey some stinging rebuke to the conscience, as was the case in the parable of the poor man and the lamb to King David. It may conceal from some that which is clear to others, depending for its appreciation upon the spiritual attitude of the individual truth or truths. It teaches spiritual truth to the which He well knew the Jews would not understand. We read in this same chapter of St. Matthew: "Therefore speak I to them in parables, because they seeing see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their hearts, and should be converted, and I should heal them." Thus the deprivation of all spiritual sight, hearing, and understanding is the penalty of stubbornly refusing to accept the truth

of the Word of God. Therefore Jesus says, "he that hath ears to hear, let him hear." That is a warning which needs to be heeded by every one who hears the truth of God, whether expressed in parables or in direct words.

While every parable of Jesus is a mosaic of thought and language, a word-picture which is marred by the excision of a word, or the introduction of a word; nevertheless, it is true that in the structure of thought some things are more essential than others. To understand the parable, one must obtain fast hold of the central truth, and explain all else from the point of view of that truth. "One may compare the entire parable," says Lisco, *Die Parabeln Jesu,* p. 22, "with a circle, of which the middle point is the spiritual truth or doctrine, and of which the radii are the several circumstances of the narration; so long as one has not placed oneself in the center, neither the circle itself appears in its perfect shape, nor will the beautiful unity with which the radii converge to a single point be perceived, but this is all observed so soon as the eye looks forth from the center." Nor are the parables the prime source of doctrine. They may illustrate doctrine and confirm it; however, the *sedes doctrinae* are not given in word-pictures but in plain, unadorned language. Parables must always be interpreted according to the analogy of faith. "If every subtle solution of one of these parables might raise itself to the dignity and authority of a Christian doctrine, the rule of faith would be nowhere. So to build were to build not on the rock, but on the sand." (Trench, *Notes on the Parables,* p. 41.)

Who is not familiar with the parables of Jesus? Who that once has heard or read the parable of The Prodigal Son, or The Lost Sheep, or The Sower, or The Tares, or The Laborers in the Vineyard, can ever forget them or miss their meaning? There are perhaps two-score of them recorded, and each one has its central spiritual truth indelibly impressed upon the memory. And when one remembers that many others were not recorded, one gets a vivid impression of the Divine wisdom and patience

and faithfulness with which He went about inculcating the truth of God.

Truly, no man ever spake as He spake. There are short, concise parables which give a wonderful picture of human life, as for example that of the Prodigal Son, or the trilogy of earth, heaven and hell in the one of the Rich Man and Lazarus. All of them give something to the weakest mind and yet perspectives of truth to cause the most intellectual mind to marvel. How inane and inept are the parables of Jewish or pagan origin as compared with those of Christ: The parables of Jesus are, as has often been said, like apples of gold in a network of silver, each one a casket of exquisite workmanship, with jewels richer than itself laid up; "as fruit, which, however lovely to look upon, is yet more delectable in its inner sweetness." To find the key that will open the casket and reveal its precious treasures is the loving study of every seeker after truth and beauty. For by the illuminating Spirit the truth will burst upon the wondering eyes of the willing and receptive mind. For such a ready mind the truth of the parable is easy to find, and once found in such beautiful adornment, is not easily forgotten. For there is in the parable a correspondence with the truth of nature which is the counterpart of the truth in the spiritual world. Jesus, the Lord of nature as of the spiritual world, sees this parallelism everywhere, even in the simplest everyday facts of life, and combines the two in the parable. And because He thus discovers the unity of law in the world of nature and in the world of the supernatural, as no human being ever has done or can do, we are fully persuaded that God was incarnate in Jesus Christ.

Everything that Jesus said or did in His public ministry is of importance to the history of redemption and has some bearing upon His redemptive work. It could not be otherwise in view of the incomprehensible fact of His entry upon this earthly life and His participation in the temporal and eternal concerns of mankind. Hence, also, His miracles so-called, the "signs" and "mighty

works," which the Evangelists record, have in every instance a far deeper purpose than that of merely showing His power over nature as one come from God. He came to seek and to save that which was lost, and only in so far as a supernatural work served to remove doubts and misgivings in the minds of men as to His Divine origin does He make use of miracles. They were but secondary and subsidiary means used to fortify His words and His Messiahship in the questioning minds of men. In that sense, His use of signs and wonders may well be set side by side with other secondary means which God uses at all times to draw men to repentance and faith, even as Sverdrup's Explanation of Luther's catechism enumerates them: "God sometimes uses sufferings, sometimes kindnesses, sometimes the example of others, and whatever else may lead men to reflect." "Many believed," we read, "when they saw the miracles He did" (John 2:23). The miracles thus served to accredit Him as sent of God. "No man can do these miracles except God be with him," says Nicodemus.

But Jesus was no miracle-monger. He had not come into the world to amuse and astonish people by signs and wonders in the realm of nature and man. He becomes impatient with the people for continually demanding signs and wonders. "Except ye see signs, ye will not believe" are His rebuking words on one occasion. The multitudes misunderstood His Person and His purpose, and ran after Him because He could feed them and heal their diseases. To certain of the Scribes and Pharisees, who wanted to see Him perform a miracle, He said: "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah" (Matt. 12:39). The curiosity of the people and their demand for signs and wonders were perfectly natural, and judging by the manner in which our sensation-hungry people of today scurry after excitement of every kind, we should probably have been no whit more sensible than were the multitudes that ran after Jesus or the mobs that crowded around St. Paul in

Athens, looking for "some new thing." And yet, in His unwearied love for souls, He did give them signs and did mighty deeds, in fact, so many, that the evangelist John in the last chapter of his book says: "And there were also many other things which Jesus did."

Miracles had been performed by men of God in the Old Covenant times. Moses had removed the plague of leprosy from his sister (Num. 12:13-15). Elijah prayed for rain after a long period of drought, and "the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain" (1 Kings 18:45). He restored life to a dead child (1 Kings 17:21, 22). Elisha restores the child of the Shunammite to life (II Kings 4:31-35). He feeds five hundred men with twenty loaves. God performed other miracles by these and other men whom He had given power to act for Him. But we note especially two points of difference between their miracles and those performed by Jesus. The one is that the miracles of the men of God in the Old Covenant were done through the power of God, and not in their own name and power, while the wonders performed by Jesus were performed in His own name and by power inherent in Himself. Another point of difference is that while their miracles were executed with difficulty, those of Jesus were accomplished with ease and by the power of His own word and in His own name. "I will, be thou clean." "Thou deaf and dumb spirit, I charge thee, Come out of him." "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise." It is the same voice that said in the beginning, "Let there be light," and we read that there was light. It is the Almighty Power of whom David says: "For He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast" (Ps. 33:9). "Thus needful was it for the disciples," says Trench, "thus needful for all, that they should have great and exclusive thoughts of Him, and should not class Him with any other, even the greatest and holiest of the children of men."

With the exception of the cursing of the fig-tree, all the miracles of Jesus were works of beneficence and

compassion. It is strange that so many, even men supposed to know the Scriptures, misunderstand the cursing of the fig-tree, others blasphemously ascribing it to the anger of Jesus in not finding food for breakfast on its leafy branches, when the context and attendant circumstances clearly enough show that the withering of the fruitless tree was to serve as a graphic illustration of the doom which awaited a spiritually fruitless people. The destruction of Jerusalem is the grim realization of the terrible warning given by the Lord in the withering of the fig-tree. At all events, the curse of the Lord fell upon an unfeeling tree and not upon human beings. All the miracles of the Lord, even the cursing of the fig-tree, are expressions of His love and compassion for humanity. As He tried to save even the traitor Judas at the last moment, so the withering of the fig-tree was a last moment effort to save a nation hastening to its doom.

As to the credibility of the miracles of Jesus, the believer finds no difficulty. In the first place he believes in the veracity of the Sacred Record. To him, the Bible is the infallible Word of God, and he believes it as it reads. Therefore when the Scriptures narrate that Jesus healed the sick, unstopped the ears of the deaf, raised the dead, or performed any wonderful work, solely by the power of His word, the believer has no hesitancy in accepting the narrative as God's truth. Jesus tells us Himself why He performed the acts which we designate as miracles.

In the second place, the believer never forgets that Jesus is the incarnate Son of God and therefore almighty. He is the Lord of nature; miracles are no miracles to Him.

Again, seeing that we are only beginning to learn some of the laws of nature, and admit that we have by no means exhausted that tremendous subject, is it not reasonable to suppose that there may be other great laws and operations in nature beyond and above those which science has dicovered? As it is, men are not so sure about the laws of nature which they think they have un-

ravelled, as for example, the law of evolution, heredity, and so on. Our knowledge is at best but approximate. Instead of brusquely asserting that science has overturned the teachings of the Bible, and relegating it to the times of superstition, would it not be more rational and more modest to admit that the will of God is supreme also over the laws of nature? Is it not rational to believe that God may act at times above and beyond the little knowledge of nature that we possess? He has bound us to certain rules; He has not bound Himself. The miracles of Jesus are no stumbling block to the faith of the man who believes that Jesus Christ is God incarnate.

XII

THE DELECTABLE MOUNTAINS

"WHAT think ye of Christ? Whose son is He?" The answer to that question is the most important thing in the world to anyone who hears the Gospel. The answer to that question detemines a man's eternal destiny, for weal or woe. Scripture passages need not be adduced to prove the correctness of that strong statement. If Jesus Christ be the Son of God, as He said He was, then His words are final in the matter of the soul's eternal destiny. The believer confesses, that "He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold and silver, but with His holy, precious blood, and with His innocent sufferings and death, in order that I might be His own, live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness, even as He is risen from the dead, and lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true." In this confession the believer has the forgiveness of sin, childhood with God, eternal life and salvation.

"God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" is the heart-cry of many a sinner. A man can not cleanse his soul from sin by his own strength, nor can he make amends for his sin. Oceans of tears are ineffectual in the washing away of guilt. For sin is sin against God, first of all; God only can forgive sin, and remove the stain of sin upon the soul. The violation of the law of God can be forgiven by God alone. Conscience condemns the sinner to alienation from a holy God. Is there no balm in Gilead? no healing for the diseased soul? no hope of the remission of sins? no restoration of the image of God in the soul?

Yes, there is, thank God, an affirmative answer to all these questions. The simple answer is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." When a man is really contrite; when he realizes the yawning abyss which sin creates between himself and a righteous God, he also realizes that his good works are but as chips on an angry flood, utterly inadequate to the blotting out of sins committed against the living God. Good works, character, flagellations, pilgrimages, are but weak craft that shatter against the inflexible rock of God's holiness. But when the shining figure of Christ emerges from the gloom, and with outstretched hands calls to the despairing soul, "Come unto Me," there is salvation, peace and rest in His loving embrace.

There is no comfort in an impersonal deity. The human soul cries out for the living God. "Give me God, or I die," is the cry of humanity We human beings can not pray to nature, nor to the universe, nor to the great forces of nature. We need a personal God, who hears our cry. Anthromorphic? Certainly. Therefore He comes to us in the likeness of man. He comes as our elder Brother, so that we can talk with Him and walk with Him, even as did the disciples in the days of His flesh. In His name we can ask of God whatsoever we need. The soul rests securely upon the promises of Christ when He says: "Every one that asketh receiveth and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." That promise gives encouragement when we ask for God.

All the promises of God since the first one given in the garden of Eden find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. He came to do the will of the heavenly Father, whose will it was that the Son should come in the flesh and bear the sin of the world in His body on the tree. The first Adam failed in holiness, the second Adam fulfilled the Law for all humanity and died for its guilt. Christ was true to His calling; He lived and died in unquestioning obedience to the will of His heavenly Father. "My meat

and my drink," He had said to His disciples, "is to do the will of Him that hath sent Me." His great work was done; the miracle of the atonement was finished. Moses, the servant of God, could not finish his work; Joshua had to finish it. Elijah did not finish his work; Elisha did that for him. (I Kings 19:16, 17.) Mohammed did not reach his ambition. Death overtook him, and his work was unfinished. So Alexander and Cæsar. Napoleon died with work and ambition unfinished. Instead of the throne of the British Empire his throne was a rock on St. Helena. "But this man" we read of Christ, "because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those other high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's; for this He did once, when He offered up Himself" (Heb. 7:24-27).

"Now if Christ be preached that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that He riseth up Christ: whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (I Cor. 15:12-18).

We note the conviction with which the apostle writes and speaks regarding the physical resurrection of Christ and the consequent resurrection of the dead. Here there is no hemming and hawing, trimming and explaining away. Either Christ is physically risen from the dead or He is not so risen. If He is actually risen from the dead, His resurrection proves that He is the Son of God,

and we who believe shall also arise from the dead, and our mortal bodies shall be changed into His similitude. If He be not so risen, then is Jesus Christ an impostor, we are deluded and the most miserable of men. Listen to St. Paul's powerful words: "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most miserable." The disciple speaks with the same Divine assurance as does his Master, who says: "I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in Me though he were dead, yet shall he live." Rationally and scientifically, there is no reason why we should not believe in the resurrection of the body. An invisible body may be as truly real as is a visible body. A man who denies the reality of the invisible body might as well deny the materiality of air, ether, or electricity. The Christian has no doubt as to the reality of the resurrection on the ground of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Let us examine our faith if it is based on the reality of the risen Christ. If our faith does not include that great fact, then are we yet in our sins, says the apostle; our so-called Christian faith is a delusion. "But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming."

"I go to My Father," Jesus had said repeatedly to His wondering disciples. "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise," He promises the penitent thief on the cross. After His resurrection He warns Mary at the empty tomb: "Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God" (John 20:17). He was in Paradise; He was on the way to the Father during the forty days of His visible and invisible presence on earth: He eats ordinary material food with His disciples; He walks with them, and talks with them; He promises to meet them in Galilee. He is visible, and as a stroke of lightning, He becomes invisible. He satisfies them as to the absolute reality of His physical resurrection from the dead.

What is the meaning of the Father's house and the many mansions?

Thus we may ask many questions regarding the sojourn of Jesus during the forty days, and not irreverently, nor from mere natural curiosity. Why should not the believer ask and wonder? We wonder how a city looks which we have never seen, and toward which we are traveling. We wonder at the sky-piercing Himalayas and the sublimity of their snow-capped, sun-kissed mountain ranges. Where are the delectable mountains? Where is the eternal city, not made with hands? Where are the many mansions and the golden streets? Is it any wonder that we ask? And yet no one can answer, no one can describe the glories of the New Jerusalem. If we have learned to mind heavenly things, we shall be satisfied to await the day when our eyes shall behold the glories of the heavenly city, even as once the Holy City burst upon the wondering eyes of Godfrey of Bouillon, or as the majestic grandeur of the Pacific greeted the astonished gaze of Balboa. Like all our fathers, we are strangers and pilgrims on the earth, and long and look for the "land that is fairer than day."

The forty days come to an end, and Jesus takes His disciples to the Mount of Olives, where He gives them the mighty commission: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." And St. Mark adds these words: "So after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God." From there He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

XIII

WITH CHRIST IN PARADISE

HOW did Christ look while here on earth in the body? Many a Christian has asked that question. No one can answer it. Isaiah the prophet, seeing Him as the Suffering Servant of God, depicts Him in these words: "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him" (Is. 53:2). King David describes Him thus: "Thou art fairer than the children of men" (Ps. 45:2). Painters have portrayed Him; sculptors have essayed to outline His features; poets have limned His countenance. But it is all imaginary; no one knows just how He looked. Nor is it necessary to know more than that He was the perfect type of man. As the First Man went forth in perfectness from the creating hand of the Almighty, so the Second Adam, who remained pure and holy, was the perfect man.

But how Christ looks now, as He reigns in glory, is described by one who saw Him in the spirit. It may be that this portrait is too strange for us to comprehend, but we remember that it was a vision granted the faithful apostle in his old age. "I saw seven golden candlesticks," he writes, "and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire; and His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters. And in His right hand seven stars; and out of His mouth went a sharp twoedged sword; and His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not, I am the first and

the last; I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen, and have the keys of hell and of death" (Rev. 1:12-18). Such is the portrait of the glorified Christ which serves as the frontispiece to the revelation vouchsafed to the beloved disciple.

The Revelation of John is the crowing glory of the Bible. In many scenes it portrays Christ the Head of the Church, and gives mysterious insights into the last things and the concluding events of all time. Here, too, we are often mystified, and can not interpret with finality. But the panorama is mighty, picturesque and impressive beyond our poor human words. A mighty battle goes forward between Christ and the Evil One, culminating in the discomfiture of Satan and the victory of Christ and the Church over all enemies. These enemies are the world, the flesh, and the devil, all of them, however, incarnate in the dark personality of Satan. Here is not a war between Ormazd and Ahriman, as Zoroaster taught, nor between Vishnu and Shiva, as the Hindus imagine; nor between Odin and Loke, as the pagans of the North believed. Here is the conflict between Christ and the devil for the possession of the souls of men, and the warfare is characterized by the most malicious cunning and unspeakable hatred of Satan, as also by the power of the love of Christ for the immortal souls of sinning humanity.

"Follow Me," were the words of Jesus to the fishermen at the Lake of Genessareth; "Follow Me" were His words to Matthew; "Follow Me," are His words to all the sons of men to the end of time. For He is the Captain of our salvation; under His banners alone can a sinner overcome the enemies of the soul. Listen to His words of encouragement, correction and promise, as addressed first to the seven churches and their leaders:

"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God" (Rev. 2:7).

"He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death" (Rev. 2:11).

"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saying he that hath received it" (Rev. 2:17).

"He that overcometh, and keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers, even as I received of My Father" (Rev. 2:26, 27).

"He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the Book of Life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels" (Rev. 3:5).

"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God, and I will write upon him My new name" (Rev. 3:12).

"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne" (Rev. 3:21).

"He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be My son" (Rev. 21:7).

Such is the exhortation, and such is the promise. What comfort to know that through Christ it is in our power to overcome Satan and all his minions. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me," says the apostle. So can we, every one of us. We can be set free from the bondage of sin, from the power of the devil. "Nay, in all these things," writes St. Paul, "we are more than conquerors through Him that loveth us" (Rom. 8:37).

St. Paul tells us how he "was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (II Cor. 12:4). St. John, also, was given a special revelation of the glories of heaven; he views this little earth with its myriads of ransomed souls, from the vantage ground of the heavenly realms.

There he sees a world where men no longer shall be burdened with the cares and sorrows of this present life; where there are no more tears, no more anxieties about the morrow, about food and clothing and shelter, about business and debts, and wrongs and injustices, "and there shall be no more pain, for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:4). There the soul shall no more be dragged down by that which is transient and sordid and out of harmony with its real nature; but it shall live and have its being in the perfect liberty of the children of God; and "God Himself shall be with them, and be their God."

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library
1 1012 01033 0357